



**Permuda Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2015, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Town of North Topsail Beach Conference Room**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
DCR Archaeology, Nathan Henry	Yes
Town of North Topsail Beach, Deb Hill	Yes
Town of North Topsail Beach, Stuart Turille	Yes
North Carolina Coastal Federation, Mike Giles	Yes
Town of North Topsail Beach PD, Chief C.J. Fillinger	Yes
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Mike Yawn	Yes
<u>Others Present</u>	
Paula Gillikin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Central Sites Manager	

Reserve-wide update (Rebecca Ellin via Paula Gillikin)

- *Legislative Update*

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources officially became the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on Sept. 18, 2015 when Governor McCrory signed the 2015 Appropriations Act into law (Session Law 2015-241).

The N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve is impacted by two additional sections in the Act. One section involves studying the removal of a portion of the New Inlet Dam at the Zeke's Island Reserve and the other will look at moving the Reserve program from DEQ to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Details for the aforementioned sections are provided below.

- *Cape Fear Estuarine Resource Restoration*

The Cape Fear Estuarine Resource Restoration section [14.6.(h)] considers the removal of a portion of the New Inlet Dam, or "the rocks," at the Zeke's Island Reserve, which is part of the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve (NCNERR). The General Assembly finds that the dam was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in the late 19th century. It further finds that the southern component of the dam impedes the natural flow of water between the Cape Fear River

and Atlantic Ocean and that it is necessary to look at removing this component of the dam in order to reestablish the natural hydrodynamic flow that occurred between the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean prior to the dam's construction. Based on the findings of the General Assembly, DEQ will take the following steps:

- (1) Notify the USACE of the State's intent to study the removal of the southern component of the dam.
- (2) Issue a Request for Information for a firm capable of conducting an analysis of the costs and benefits of removing the southern component of the dam. The analysis will incorporate all necessary State and federal permits and approvals needed to develop and implement a removal plan.
- (3) Request approval from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to adjust the boundary for the Zeke's Island Reserve. This adjustment involves moving the western boundary of Zeke's Island Reserve 200 feet seaward and removing the area that lies between the current and new boundary from the NCNERR. To compensate for loss of acreage from the boundary adjustment, the State proposes to add equivalent acreage to the northern boundary of Zeke's Island Reserve from adjacent acreage at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area.
- (4) If NOAA approves of the boundary adjustment, the Coastal Resources Commission will amend the Reserve Components Rule (15A NCAC 070 .0105) as further described in the Act.

DEQ will provide a report on its implementation of this section including a copy of the Request for Information and any responses received to the Environmental Review Commission and relevant General Assembly committees no later than April 1, 2016.

DEQ or any state agency cannot proceed with the removal of the dam until the Environmental Review Commission has reviewed the report and a bill providing authorization for the removal becomes law.

- *Study Further Efficiencies in Organization of Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and Department of Environmental Quality*

The 2015 Appropriations Act also transferred many DEQ attractions, including the N.C. Aquariums, State Parks, and Zoo, to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR). The 2015 Appropriations Act calls for a study [14.31.(a-b)] by DNCR in consultation with DEQ and the Wildlife Resources Commission to look at moving additional agencies, divisions, and programs to DNCR for potential efficiency, cost savings, and alignment of core mission and values. These include:

- (1) Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership.
- (2) Coastal Reserve Program.
- (3) Office of Land and Water Stewardship.
- (4) All or a portion of the Office of Environmental Education and Public Affairs.
- (5) Division of Marine Fisheries.
- (6) Wildlife Resources Commission.

By April 1, 2016, DNCR will report the findings of this study to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Natural and Economic Resources, the chairs of the House Appropriations Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, and the Fiscal Research Division.

- *Budget*

- The NCNERR received \$594,450 from NOAA for operation of the program during this fiscal year, up \$1,450 from last year.
- The Division of Coastal Management's state appropriations were reduced by nearly \$100,000 this fiscal year as a result of the recurring 2% management flexibility reduction and its share of the \$1 million reduction for the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality required by the General Assembly in the 2015 Appropriations Act. As a result, the appropriations allocated for the Reserve program were reduced by approximately \$12,672.

- *NCNERR Management Plan Update*

Staff are continuing to write the full draft management plan update for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve. This draft is informed by comments received by the local advisory committees on the strategic plan outline at the Spring committee meetings as well as comments from NOAA. The timeline for the management plan update process has been updated as a result of the writing taking longer than anticipated and receiving additional clarity on the reviews needed. Thus, input will be solicited on the full draft management plan from the LACs this winter. Staff will also be seeking input from the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality, N.C. Coastal Resources Commission, and NOAA as part of the process. A 30-day public comment period and three public meetings will be held on the final draft management plan prior to the plan's final publication in 2016, as previously described.

- *LAC Community Member Appointments*

An additional extension request will be submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality to extend terms of Local Advisory Committee members serving in community member seats that expired in December 2014 through December 2016. The request for extension will ensure continuity throughout the NCNERR Management Plan update process. An application and appointment process will be undertaken during the fall of 2016.

Site Update – Old Business (Paula Gillikin)

- *Oyster Restoration and Shoreline Protection Project*

In 2011, the Reserve and N.C. Coastal Federation partnered on a project to enhance and protect the shoreline of Permuda Island at the old causeway connection utilizing oyster bags and plantings of native vegetation. Oyster recruitment to the bags has been limited, although a small number of adult oysters are growing on the loose shells and many invertebrates were identified using the area as habitat. Stump Sound's currents and larval supply could be two factors that are affecting the success of the project. The Reserve and N.C. Coastal Federation will continue to observe the project area to evaluate long-term success.

Site Update – New Business (Paula Gillikin)

- *Derelict Crab Pots*

Derelict crab pots have consistently been present along Permuda's shoreline, although their numbers have been decreasing. In the winter of 2013, Reserve staff contacted Marine Patrol and alerted them to the number of pots along Permuda's shoreline and just offshore. Marine Patrol officers were able to remove 40 derelict pots from the area during the annual crab pot clean-up. They will continue to include Permuda

Island and Stump Sound in future derelict crab pot removal efforts. The next clean-up will be in January-February 2016.

- *Natural History Monitoring*

Periodic deployment of wildlife cameras has not led to any new information about the wildlife inhabiting Permuda Island. Staff will continue to deploy cameras when feasible.

- *Habitat Map*

The Reserve's Geographic Information Systems Specialist used aerial imagery and established habitat identification protocols to produce a habitat map of Permuda Island. In May, Reserve staff visited several places on the island to test the map's accuracy. A final map will soon be produced and distributed to committee members.

- *Un-manned Aerial Systems Capabilities*

Researchers at Duke University Marine Lab are interested in exploring the possibility of using un-manned aerial systems to assist in archaeological research at Permuda Island. Paula provided the researchers with Nathan Henry's contact information, given his vested interest in documenting the archaeological resources there.

Member Roundtable and Other Comments

- The committee discussed how reorganization of the Department of Environmental Quality may or may not lead to changes in environmental regulations that would affect Permuda and Stump Sound.
- Some committee members discussed their interest in visiting Permuda Island once per year when Paula visits the site.
- Members discussed the value of the Reserve collating historical documents and oral histories about Permuda, especially information related to Lena Ritter and her role in the protection of the island. It was suggested that Paula contact a local citizen who has a lot of knowledge about Permuda.

Public Comments

- None

Actions Items

- Paula will follow-up on Chief Fillinger's suggestion to contact a local citizen about Permuda's history.
- Paula will send all of her Lena Ritter files to the committee.
- Paula will let the committee know when she visits the site in case members would like to join.